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23 September 2011

Mrs Liz Brand
Acting Executive Headteacher
Sennen School
Sennen
Penzance
Cornwall
TR19 7AW

Dear Mrs Brand

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sennen School

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 September 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in July 2010

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately
 - ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability
 - ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work
 - improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics.

- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils
 - driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses
 - ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Sennen School Report from the third monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 September 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, reviewed a recent survey of parents' views, visited lessons and looked at a wide range of the pupils' work. He met with the acting executive headteacher, teaching staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, and pupils. The inspector also had a meeting with the senior school improvement officer from the local authority.

Context

The staffing at the school remains the same as at the last monitoring inspection in May. None of the current teaching staff were working at the school when it was inspected in July 2010.

The substantive headteacher has resigned from the school. A part-time teacher continues to be absent through illness.

The acting executive headteacher has been leading the school since late September 2010 and continues to divide her time between Sennen and her substantive headship. At the end of December, she will leave the school. Governors are currently in the process of appointing an acting headteacher to lead the school from January 2012 as part of longer-term plans for the strategic leadership and management of the school.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2, attainment continues to show clear improvement. Learning journals in the Early Years Foundation Stage are particularly effective in recording progress made by children and enabling a sharp focus on the next steps in learning. The Key Stage 1 assessments for this year, moderated by the local authority, show that the proportion achieving the expected Level 2 in mathematics, reading and writing was broadly in line with national figures, allowing for the small cohorts involved. Overall, the strongest performance was in mathematics but in all three subjects, performance was weaker than the national figures at the higher Level 3. In the summer Key Stage 2 statutory assessments, the unvalidated results show 70% of pupils achieved Level 4 or better in mathematics, with 80% gaining this threshold in reading; these are broadly in line with national outcomes. The figure for writing was 90%, which was above the national figure. Once again, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was lower than the national average in all three subjects. However, overall these outcomes represent good, and in some cases outstanding, progress made by the pupils over the last year. School tracking data

show clearly this impressive acceleration in progress made since September 2010. This is particularly strong in mathematics, where the average improvement in attainment represents one whole National Curriculum level.

This sustained acceleration in progress has been based on the effective tracking of the progress made by individual pupils and providing intervention to support learning if required. Better progress tracking has led to further improvement in lesson planning which provides carefully targeted personalised activities which challenge pupils well. This, in turn, has led to pupils' reinforced understanding of number work, with specific teaching to deal with gaps in understanding and knowledge. An example of this highly effective challenge was seen during a session of Terror Tables for older pupils where they were set a two-minute challenge to calculate and write specific tables. These ranged from the usual tables from one to ten to numbers such as 0.02 and 0.05 which challenged more able pupils. In lessons with mixed age classes, activities were skilfully matched to age and ability. For example, in one lesson with older Key Stage 2 pupils, some groups were undertaking a range of practical work on the attributes of 2D shapes whilst others were using protractors to measure and record acute, obtuse and reflex angles.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school; their attitudes to learning are good. They are proud of the responsibilities they have in, for example, leading the house teams and preparing for assemblies. Attendance remains a focus for the school. Overall, the school is an inclusive community where pupils are given good opportunities to learn in a safe and caring environment.

The effectiveness of provision

The system for tracking pupil progress is now well established. This information continues to be used effectively to prepare lessons which are appropriate and challenge the wide age ranges found in classes. The information resulting from the regular assessment of progress is shared with pupils and their parents and carers in a regular and systematic way. Pupils have colour-coded targets in their English and mathematics books, understand these and know what they need to do to achieve them. In lessons, pupils continue to use a traffic light system to indicate how well they feel they have learned the objectives of their learning tasks.

The development and consolidation of systems to measure the progress made and set challenging targets for pupils are continuing to support improvement in the quality of teaching. Teachers know the pupils in their classes well and use the systems established to develop effective learning activities which are appropriately active and enjoyable. For example, a group of Year 1 pupils were confidently writing about characters from a story. They had clear ideas about what they wanted to say, knew that sentences began with a capital letter, ended with a full stop and words needed a finger space between them. They understood how to sound out the letters for the words they wanted to write; the words they wrote were spelt in a phonically plausible way. Overall, they were developing into confident and skilful writers.

The whole-school planning for all subjects in the curriculum is well established, based on National Curriculum levels. This is used in a highly effective way to develop medium range planning which, for English, mathematics and science, targets particular ability groups with effective information on the levels pupils are currently working at, together with detailed notes on the next steps in their learning. This includes planning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The quality of the planning available leads to highly focused teaching and learning activities which challenge pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills extremely well.

The 'Wow, How, Now' system for marking continues to reinforce learning well. The marking system is an effective tool for supporting pupils' learning understood by all the older pupils. However, pupils do not have sufficient time to reflect on their marking in order to make the most of this guidance.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately – good
- ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability – good
- ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning – outstanding
- improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The acting executive headteacher is a strong leader and continues to drive forward the educational direction of the school. She has initiated a wide range of systems into the school, all based on improving attainment and accelerating progress. Her monitoring of teaching and systematic analysis of pupils' progress tracking and planning provide effective support for further improvement. She continues to support and guide staff well and survey evidence shows that parents and carers appreciate the developments in the work of the school. The impact of the systems

she has introduced on attainment and progress can be seen clearly. She should be proud of her role in the improvements seen in the school over that last year.

Governors have gained significantly in confidence and understanding of their role over the last year. They have been fully engaged in the training opportunities made available to them by the local authority and used their improved skills to develop support and challenge for the school. The systems they have developed mean that they have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have researched thoroughly the options available for the strategic development of the school and are in a good position to take the important decisions about the future direction of the school. They are fully aware that they have a significant role to play in securing the continued improvement of the school and now have the skills to undertake this task.

Progress since last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils – good
- driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses – good
- ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils – good.

External support

Although the overall support for the school has reduced appropriately as the school has developed a stronger capacity for sustained improvement, it continues to benefit from an effective range of support from local authority staff focusing on early years, the monitoring of teaching and learning and guidance for the governing body. Governors particularly appreciate the support given to them by the senior school improvement officer.

Priorities for further improvement

- Implement the recent decisions by the governing body to secure leadership and management at the school from January 2012.